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ABSTRACT

Published descriptions of inservice education for elementary and secondary administrators focus on what is being done, by whom it is being done, and the intent or goals of the programs. Program effectiveness, or the lack thereof, is seldom reported. Studies of inservice programs reveal agreement on program weaknesses but little consensus on the details of alternative processes or on desirable goals. Few inservice programs feature improvement of administrator effectiveness through examination of individual performance and adoption of programs incorporating ongoing development. Typical inservice experiences involve attendance at unrelated, topic-oriented conferences and workshops. Current inservice programs tend to be either informal projects of individual administrators or specialized short-term programs sponsored by, and meeting the needs of, universities, large urban school districts, state or federal categorical programs, professional associations, or private organizations. The topics covered generally focus on management skills or contemporary issues without addressing the larger question of how the principal can be instrumental in school improvement. (Author/PGD)

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Inservice Education for Principals

(The State of the Art)

James LaPlant

"The quality of an educational program is largely dependent on the school principal." "The principal's leadership style is related to improved learning experiences." "The principal is the key to a good school." These pronouncements can be attributed to numerous people who have studied the relationship between the principal's role and educational quality. Regardless of the extent of the empirical base for such statements, they represent generally held assumptions regarding the importance of the principal's role.

Given that the role is an important element in the schooling process and the lack of a research-based relationship between formal preservice preparation and job effectiveness, the case can be made for inservice education as a means of improving principals' performance and ultimately the quality of pupils' education. The importance of inservice education for principals is underscored by many notions: (1) the principal is cast as the preserver of tradition, some of which may not serve today's educational needs (Sarason: 113), (2) there are fewer younger principals due to the decrease in new positions being created because of school-aged population decline (Brown:19), and (3) the principalship has become something that one survives (Pharis:4).

Yet, the fact remains that never has there been greater need for improved preservice and particularly inservice educations.... The state of inservice education remains a wasteland...(Houts:8). The paradox of believing that the principal is a key element in the schooling process and not doing a better job of nurturing improved principal performance prompts an examination of the state of inservice education.

This examination assumes that there is a predetermined ideal model which is the exemplar of an effective principal. This paper will not delineate the role specifications of an ideal principal but will use the assumption that the principal is to be a prime mover in the school improvement process. The danger of analyzing inservice programs without having a clear role model is recognized; it is hoped that the analysis of inservice efforts might contribute clarity to what the ideal role might become. Other delimitations of this review are worth mentioning.

Published descriptions of inservice education for principals are focused on what is being done by whom and the intent or goals of described programs. Program effectiveness or lack thereof is seldom reported.

The delimiting of this analysis to inservice programs excludes training, an area which is heavily influenced by state certification standards and the traditions of college and university-based education. However, the results of this analysis and their implications for existing preservice

training models might be examined by such programs. The report will (1) summarize findings from major studies of the principalship which may have implications for inservice education, (2) review the findings of status studies of inservice education for administrators, and (3) present some general conclusions based upon an extensive search of the literature on inservice training for principals.

Status Studies of the Principalship

Both the elementary and secondary principals associations have conducted national surveys of principals to determine the status of the principalship. The 1977 survey of secondary principals (Byrne, et.al.) documents changes which have occurred since an earlier 1965 survey. The senior high principalship continues to be a white male dominated profession with the typical female principal likely to be found working in a small parochial or private religious school in a large urban area located in the New England or mid-Atlantic states. The typical minority principal would be found working in a large high school in a large urban area probably located in the south, southwest, or on the west coast.

There are fewer younger and fewer older principals in 1977 than in 1965. More principals have more formal training, and their initial appointment is occurring at a later age. Consistent with the national decline in student enrollment, the trend toward consolidation, and the growth of larger

schools, principals tend to serve in one position for an extended time, and a significant number indicate the principalship as a final career field (Byrne, et.al.:13).

Relative to other jobs, principals report a longer work week and more time being spent on school management, but also a desire to give top priority to program development. They feel they have ample opportunity for independent thought and action, enjoy a reasonable amount of authority in the area of staff selection, but have only moderate participation in budget matters. The three most frequently mentioned barriers to job tasks' accomplishment are excessive time demands of administrative detail, lack of time, and variation in teacher ability (Byrne, et.al.:31). A dramatic change has occurred in the human elements with which a principal works. The typical American high school has changed from an institution with fewer than 500 students to an institution of more than 750 students. The number of schools with over 2,000 students has doubled from 1965 to 1978. The ripple effect caused by changes in size, communications, interpersonal relationships, leadership expectations, control procedures and budget administration calls for different professional skills. Added to the change in size, the changes in student aspirations, the nature of the faculty, and increased community involvement, the need for a new perspective becomes pressing (Bryne, et.al.:43-44). The principals viewed the lack of parental interest, of maturation

in students, and of teachers' unprofessional behavior as the major community constraints to the principal's performance (Byrne, et.al.:56). In summary, the report concludes with a call for redefinition of the principalship by the professional field (Byrne, et.al.:63).

The 1968 survey of elementary school principals, coupled with similar surveys reported in 1928, 1948 and 1958, permit some trends to be identified. The proportion of women in supervising principalships continues to decline. Other changes which were evident in 1968 include increases in the types and number of available resource people, e.g. speech therapists; psychologists; reading specialists; science specialists; librarians; specialists for testing, curriculum, guidance, foreign language, exceptional children, research and audiovisual. When asked where new ideas that lead to changes in practice come from, local workshops were reported as the primary sources followed by professional contacts. Professional reading as a source of new ideas was mentioned by twenty percent of principals (The Elementary School Principalship in 1968...a Research Study). Many of the perceptions would need to be re-checked today, but the prevailing perceptions would need to be checked out today, but the prevailing message of "change which will continue to take place" is one which has probably accelerated in the past ten years.

A more recent study under the direction of Keith Goldhammer (Becker, et.al.) identified characteristics of successful elementary principals. Characteristics such as a sincere

faith in children, the ability to work effectively with people, being able strategists, demonstrating aggressiveness in securing recognition of school needs, being adaptable, recognizing their role in current social problems, and possessing the ability to distinguish between long- and short-term educational goals are items which could be foci of inservice training programs.

Another set of materials which provided insights into the principal's role was Chautauqua '74--"The Remaking of the Principalship," a series of articles which became the major content of four issues of the NAEP Principal. These articles revealed two major concerns: the inadequacy of the preparation program and the lack of opportunities for continuing education (Houts:5).

Studies of Inservice Programs

There have been some rather limited national studies of inservice programs for school administrators. Some of these reports represent search efforts to find an appropriate strategy for providing inservice education rather than to determine the state of the art.

The Conference Board explored the need to establish special training centers to develop uniquely prepared personnel for key leadership positions in education. The report (Creamer and Feld) analyzed the performance of the public school system in the sixties, profiled the super-

intendents in large city school systems, examined emerging training trends, gave a synopsis of innovational programs in 1972 and concluded that the universities will rise to meet the unmet needs of training educational leaders. While this report focused on the some 900 leadership positions in the country's largest cities and state departments of education, there are several findings which reflect on the state of the art. The report indicated considerable agreement on the weaknesses of past and current training programs but little consensus on the operating details of alternative programs. There is a lack of specific knowledge about those training programs that will maximize the effectiveness of educational leadership in the metropolitan school districts (Creamer and Feld:70). The same judgments can be made about the principalship role which has been identified as a crucial change agent position.

A second study of inservice programs for educational administrators and supervisors is a survey report with sample program descriptions, evaluation forms, and district policy statements completed in 1974 (Doob). Examination of specific survey results suggests that most administrators see themselves as getting inservice experiences by way of short-term conferences and seminars, usually focused on a specific topic such as management techniques, planning, budgeting, or negotiations. The survey was to include all programs for which the school district plans, coordinates, and/or provides full or partial funding. With this definition and the

assumption that many smaller districts support administrator attendance at state conferences or institutes, the survey takes on the aspects of administrator participation in the state and national professional association conferences, at least for those from smaller districts. (Two/thirds of the respondents were from districts having less than 10,000 students). Albeit, the following observations about inservice programs can be made.

There was no direct mention of topics suggesting a focus on improving administrator effectiveness by examining individual performance and engaging in prolonged efforts to improve both personally and professionally. Management by objectives programs do start with this focus. Secondly, the whole concept of change or the administrator's role in the change process was not mentioned as a topic. A number of the sample program descriptions do mention problem solving skills. Some hope might be gleaned from the number of systems (87.5% of large systems and 64.9% of medium-sized systems) which reported plans to change their inservice programs.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals through the Committee of Professors of Secondary School Administration and Supervision has attempted to improve the identification, definition and implementation of key elements in preservice and inservice programs. Their 1975 monograph (Kelley, et.al.) recommends training for creative decision-making using the DPIE--diagnosing, prescribing, implementing,

and evaluating--processes. A central theme is the collaboration between professors and principals to facilitate the continuing professional renewal needed by incumbents of both roles.

The National Association of Elementary Principals (NAEP) in conjunction with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, report the current range of opinion concerning the goals of inservice training, the skills necessary for effective leadership, the structure of training programs and the methods of designing, implementing and coordinating inservice training programs (Higley). There is widespread agreement on the need for inservice training for principals which dissipates into considerable disagreement over what such training is supposed to accomplish. Inservice training is to improve the competence of principals; it is difficult to achieve consensus on a definition of competence. The report indicates that no startling new methods for the inservice training of principals were introduced in the five years preceding the report. Informal methods of instruction were used in competency models. Regarding implementation and coordination of programs, Norman Brachler is quoted (Higley:15) in a report that indicated only one large city school district out of 34 respondents to a questionnaire reporting an ongoing inservice program for its administrators.

Another view is that professional organizations are the appropriate agents to design comprehensive plans for in-

service training. Using this rationale, Wayson's proposal (Wayson: 39-40) for a National Consortium for Developing School Leadership calls for moving the basic training centers out of the ordinary graduate school, much in the way that the medical profession has withdrawn from the university. The state department and a "new inservice center" are also seen as potential sources of assistance to administrators (Brown:22).

The Higley report cites three basic issues in initiating and coordinating inservice training: (1) funding, which in turn depends on (2) interagency cooperation, which in turn depends on (3) the prestige of the principalship.

The image problem involves how to keep principals abreast of developments and at the same time give them the status they feel they deserve--in other words, how to admit weakness in order to gain strength (Higley:19). The major complaint running through the literature is that the educational system at all levels is too entrenched in its ways, too afraid to be flexible and allow things to take their natural course. The principals, the universities and school districts all have their vested interests. To loosen up somewhat in order to make gains for everyone--for education itself--is difficult and painful but seems to be a necessary first step toward revitalized inservice education (Higley:19).

Clarity on the ideal principal role is not achieved in the literature. The move toward more inservice eduction is analogous to developing a "head of steam" but having no place to go. It may just "pop off" like the teakettle in

order to relieve the pressure, or it may explode and destroy the principalship in the process.

Summary of Literature Search

The analysis of the inservice education of principals can be summarized in brief descriptions of major program sources, the nature of their activity, and the special program content or focus. The descriptions, not in any preconceived order, serve as a reminder of what is already available.

1. Informal self-improvement programs serve as the source of inservice for many administrators. Some of their activities include reading, writing, travel, and participation in community activities. The choice of activity is based upon some self-assessment, sometimes implicit, and may not be sufficiently goal-focused to have an impact on the principal's performance. However, it should not be overlooked as a means of inservice which can provide a broad perspective necessary for leadership roles.

2. The university based inservice programs have traditionally provided course work and advanced degrees. There are some short workshops or seminars offered by university based inservice centers, but often the universities' self-interest prevails in terms of the usual course offerings. Even here, course selection is not the best because factors such as time, availability, certification requirements and degree requirements overshadow a selection growing out of

professional improvement needs. Universities have organized special leadership programs sometimes supported by outside funding such as EPDA or private foundations, but most often these programs are used as means to provide support for full-time trainees. There does not appear to be well-conceived inservice approaches that meet the needs of administrators. Special field-based programs, such as Nova University or Union Graduate School, serve to loosen up the "system", but the long-range outlook regarding innovative approaches is, at best, doubtful.

3. School district based programs are likely to be found in large urban districts which may have some state or federal project support for staff development. Los Angeles Unified School District has a staff development program which recognizes that no single training model can meet the needs of the entire district. A number of other systems have comprehensive programs for inservice: San Francisco; Oakland; Long Beach; Houston; Milwaukee; Fairfax County, Virginia; Baltimore County, Maryland; Palm Beach County, Florida; Hyde Park, New York; Mesa Arizona Public Schools; Hillsborough County, Florida; White Bear Area Schools, Minnesota (Olivero and Doob).

4. A special source of inservice education which includes the principal, sometimes as a mandated participant, are the categorical programs funded by state and/or federal programs. These tend to be narrowly focused on operational

aspects of the specific program and not on administrator performance. Examples of these categorical programs would be: ESEA Title I, educationally disadvantaged programs, early childhood and PL94-142 programs.

5. A major source of professional inservice training is the national or state level professional association. The AASA established the National Academy of School Executives in 1969. The Academy sponsors 5-day in-depth seminars, 2 and 1/2-day skill and orientation institutes and 1-day mini-institutes in different regions of the country. The NASSP has a similar function through the National Institute for Secondary School Administration (NISSA) which sponsors institutes and programs for principals and front line conferences and seminars for assistant principals. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) does not operate its own seminars but does co-sponsor summer workshops with cooperating universities. The ASCD conducts 3-day national curriculum study institutes four times per year. All of these organizations offer annual conventions and their state counterparts usually have a state conference and some state seminars on topics of special interest. The content of the institutes, seminars, and conferences usually centers on topics which the membership has identified as important. The NASE summer 1978 topics include building level problems of PL94-142, time management, administrative teamwork, leadership, legal issues, staff evaluation, competency based education, financial management, collective bargaining,

program evaluation, supervisory effectiveness and managerial effectiveness. The NASSP institutes for 1978 include many of the above topics plus student behavior--motivation and positive discipline, school security and vandalism; women in secondary school administration; declining enrollment; executive stress--coping and synergizing; and program development in junior/middle schools. The ASCD 1978 institutes focus on moral education, parent participation, learning/teaching, instructional supervision, graduation competencies, middle schools and curriculum evaluation.

Another activity which provides a different model is the Danforth/NASE fellowship program in which 40 participating administrators follow an individualized course of study during the months of January, July, and August.

6. Private organizations have engaged in inservice projects. The Charles F. Kettering, Ltd. Foundation program stimulated the development of individually oriented learning opportunities for school personnel (Brainard). ACT--Administrators for Change Training--by Pedamorphosis has developed a set of training modules to enable administrators to become more knowledgeable, skillful, and confident in managing the processes of planned change (Pedamorphosis brochure). The Danforth Foundation operates a program for principals involving cross-system exchange. Culbertson noted the increase and decline of staff development programs for educational personnel by profit-making organizations according to the availability of federal funds (Culbertson:106).

7. The center concept as exemplified in the teacher centers which are being funded by the federal government is oriented toward instructional improvement or total staff development. These centers will have implications for staff development resources but are broader than administrator inservice. In fact, one might not expect much attention to administrator concerns in view of the governance structure which has a majority of the control group allocated to teachers. However, the DHEW announced to the 1978 AASA convention their intent to provide assistance to school administrators.

8. The consortia or league concept for providing inservice opportunities for principals has elements which might be useful. The cross-district or at least cross-school sharing can be an important ingredient in the learning process. Certainly, the idea of sharing resources for mutual benefit is more powerful than individual organizations going it alone.

9. The National Council of States on Inservice Education has been created to provide a way for states to examine, discuss and disseminate information about inservice goals, training materials, and retraining strategies. Twenty-one states, plus representatives from AACTE, AASA, AFT, ATE, NEA, NSOE and Teacher Corps Networks are involved in the project funded by the USOE through a contract with Syracuse. The issues explored in their publications are more general than administrator inservice, but concepts are relevant to

the problem of improving schools through inservice education.

In summary, there is considerable interest in inservice education but the variety of purposes, processes, settings and motivations suggests little consensus regarding the processes or strategies involved, even if the goal of improving professional performance is agreed upon. Principals gain knowledge and sometimes skills through professional associations, district or regional programs sponsored by professional organizations, local districts (particularly in large urban districts), and funded programs. The topics of inservice generally focus on management skills or contemporary issues without addressing the larger question of how the principal can be instrumental in school improvement.

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